Arkansas Program Improvement Plan Work Plan

Strategy 1 – Develop and implement a family friendly assessment and case planning process

DCFS believes that concerns about assessment and case planning were the key concerns that came from the CFSR and are critical to quality services to children and families. We believe that if we revise our assessment and case planning process to make it easy for staff to utilize and family friendly, those actions will impact most of the findings in the report. Therefore, our key strategy is to review and improve that process. This process will result in improvements in many areas, including:

- *improve assessment of risk, case planning and services to families so that identified risks are appropriately addressed and children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate. This process would be used in all cases, including services to Families in Need of Services (FINS) [Outcome S2 - Items 3 and 4, Outcome P1 – Items 5 and 7, and Outcome WB1 – Items 17 and 18];*
- *reduce re-entry into foster care by assuring that children's needs are met while in care, that services are delivered to the family to address issues that led to state intervention and that services continue after the child's return home until the family and DCFS believe services are no longer needed [Outcome P1- Item 5]*
- *improve the timeliness of permanency for children through increased skill in concurrent planning [Outcome P1 - Items 7 and 9];*
- *increase the involvement of families in the case planning process [Outcome WB1 - Item 18];*
- *improve connections between foster children and their families [Outcome P2 - Items 13 and 14];*
- *increase children who can be placed with their siblings and with relatives [Outcome P2 - Item 12 and 15]*
- *assure appropriate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings [Outcome P2 - Item 13];*
- *enhance the quality and documentation and increase workers' visits with children and with parents [Outcome P1 - Item 6 and Outcome WB 1 – Items 17, 19 and 20];*
- *increase supports to foster parents and thereby increase stability of foster care placements [Outcome P1 – Item 6 and Outcome WB1 – Item 17];*
- *assure that children's educational, physical and mental health needs are assessed and addressed [Outcome WB2 - Items 21-23];*
- *assure all youth who leave foster care have independent living skills [Outcome P1 - Item 8];*
- *assure that non-custodial fathers are involved in case planning [Outcome P1 – Item 7 and WB1 – Item 18];*
- *assure that a child's Native American heritage is identified and appropriately addressed [Outcome P2 – Item 14]. .*

This strategy will be implemented through use of a Work Group that is comprised of DCFS staff from all levels including direct service and direct service supervision, CACD staff, stakeholders, including the courts, and consumers. It will examine the risk assessment, assessment and case planning process through a review of policy, procedures, tools, systems, training, supervision and quality assurance.

Because this is a major initiative that will take much staff and stakeholder time and effort, and in recognition that the results of such a system change will not be realized for many months, we identified other actions that could be addressed more quickly, would not conflict with the long-range activities and could make a positive difference in the lives of children and their families sooner. These include the following:

- *Development of an automated monitoring report to allow supervisors to track completion of initial risk assessments.*

- *Training for DCFS staff and attorneys, judges, Attorney-Ad-Litems, and CASA on concurrent planning and adoption New DCFS workers are already being trained on concurrent planning, but, based on CFSR findings, the concept may not be uniformly accepted or practiced. Training will be offered to key DCFS staff and OCC attorneys to assure everyone has the same knowledge base on these topics and to assist with practice related issues. Although some of the tools may change with the larger enhancements, the concept will stay the same. In addition, although Foster Pride/Adopt Pride Training that is used to train all foster and adoptive parents contains some information on concurrent planning and adoption, we want to determine if that content can be improved.*

- *Development of new Independent Living policy and procedures and training for staff, foster parents and providers on the new policy and procedures, in order to increase the uniformity and quality of Independent Living services statewide.*

- *Revision of policy and practice on visitation between children in foster care and their parents, siblings and other significant people in their lives. Some changes may result from the long range strategy, but we know that we need to immediately identify barriers to visitation and take steps to address them, including clarification of policy on visitation between siblings after TPR.*

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
1.1 In order to assure services are provided to protect children, supervisors will monitor completion of risks assessments in all cases. (Impacts CFSR Items 3 and 4)	1.1.1 As an interim measure, an automated monthly monitoring report will be developed to allow supervisors to track completion of initial risk assessments. Benchmark: As an interim measure, an automated monthly monitoring report to allow supervisors to track completion of initial risk assessments. 1.1.2 Baseline will be established. Benchmark: Submission of baseline information. 1.1.3 County Supervisors and Area Managers will submit corrective action plan, which outlines action to be taken to assure risk assessments are completed on all cases to the Assistant Director for Community Services for area compliance less than 80%. Benchmark: County Supervisors and Area Managers will submit corrective action report to Assistant Director for Community Services for area compliance less than 80%. 1.1.4 New Supervisory Review Tool will monitor completion of risk assessment at case opening, periodically and at closure. Benchmark: County Supervisors utilize the Supervisory Review Tool.	09/01/03 09/01/03 10/01/03 10/01/03	Marilyn Counts, Manager, Quality Assurance Marilyn Counts, Manager, Quality Assurance Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services Marilyn Counts, Manager, Quality Assurance Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	
1.2 In order to protect children and prevent removal, we will revise the risk assessment and family assessment policy, procedures, tools, systems, training and supervisory and monitoring tools and processes to assure that risks are identified and addressed throughout the life of the case. (Impacts CFSR Items 3 – 9, 12-15, 17-23)	1.2.1 In conjunction with technical assistance coordinated by the National Resource Center on Family Centered Practice, a workgroup will be formed to review and revise, as appropriate, the risk assessment and family assessment policy, procedures, tools, systems, training, and supervisory and monitoring tools and processes. Benchmark: In conjunction with technical assistance coordinated by the NRC on Family Centered Practice, a written report with recommendations for change will be developed.	01/01/04	Pat Page, Assistant Director LARP; Shirlee Flanagin-Isbell, Administrator, In-Home Services
	1.2.2 The new process will be piloted in one DCFS Area. Staff in that area will be trained, will implement the new process, and will assist with an evaluation of the pilot. Benchmark: Document outlining implementation and evaluation of pilot of new assessment process in one county for one month, with a statement of any recommended changes to the process.	02/01/04	Pat Page, Assistant Director of LARP; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services
	1.2.3 Based on the results of the pilot, recommended changes suggested by the pilot will be implemented. This will include but not be limited to changes in policy, procedure, tools and systems. Benchmark: Policy, procedure and tools promulgated and CHRIS system changes completed.	05/01/04	Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy; Darcy Dinning, CHRIS Project Manager
	1.2.4 Develop training curriculum to train DCFS field staff . Benchmark: Completion of training curriculum document on Risk and Family Needs Assessment.	06/13/04	Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development
	1.2.5 Family Service Workers (FSW's) and Supervisors will be trained on the new assessment process. Benchmark: 90% of existing DCFS FSW's and Supervisors will be trained on Risk and Family Needs Assessment.	08/01/04	Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services

	1.2.6 The training will be incorporated into the new worker and supervisor training.		Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development
	Benchmark: Existing training curriculum for new workers and supervisors revised to reflect the new policy and processes.	08/01/04	
	1.2.7 Implement new assessment process statewide.		Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director Community Services
	Benchmark: New policy and procedures will be in effect and implemented statewide.	08/01/04	

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
1.3 We will revise the case planning process, policies, procedures, tools, systems, training and supervisory and monitoring tools to assure appropriate providers and family members are involved, including non-custodial parents where appropriate, and that case plans are developed to keep children safe and prevent removal. This will include development of a standard supervisory review process (Impacts CFSR Items 3 – 9, 12-15, 17-23)	1.3.1 In conjunction with technical assistance coordinated by the National Resource Center on Family Centered Practice, a workgroup will review and revise, as appropriate, the case planning process, policies, procedures, tools, systems, training, and supervisory and monitoring tools to make them more family friendly, more worker friendly and more coordinated. The new process will assure appropriate providers and family members, including non-custodial parents when appropriate, and age-appropriate children are involved in development of the case plan. It will include a standard supervisory review process that will assure case plans are based on the family assessment and involve the family in development.		Pat Page, Assistant Director, LARP; Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, Out-of-Home Services
	Benchmark: In conjunction with technical assistance coordinated by the National Resource Center on Family Centered Practice, a written report with recommendations for change is completed.	05/01/04	
	1.3.2 Pilot new process in one DCFS Area. Staff in that area will be trained, will implement the new process, and will assist with an evaluation of the pilot.		Pat Page, Assistant Director, LARP
	Benchmark: Document outlining implementation and evaluation of pilot of new case planning process in one county for two months, with a statement of any recommended changes to the process.	07/01/04	Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services
	1.3.3 Based on the results of the pilot, the changes recommended during the case planning processes, amended to include changes suggested by the pilot, will be implemented. This will include but not be limited to changes in policy, procedure, tools and systems.		Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy; Darcy Dinning, Manager, CHRIS
	Benchmark: Policy, procedure and tools promulgated and CHRIS systems changes completed.	10/01/04	
	1.3.4 Develop training curriculum to train DCFS field staff on case planning process.		Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit.
	Benchmark: Completion of training curriculum document	11/15/04	

	1.3.5 Train DCFS staff on the new case planning process. Benchmark: 90% of existing DCFS FSW's, Supervisors, Area Managers and program staff will be trained on the new case planning process. Providers will also participate in the training.	03/01/05	Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services
	1.3.6 The training will be incorporated into the new worker and supervisor training. Benchmark: Existing training curriculum for new workers and supervisors will be revised to reflect the new policy and processes	03/01/05	Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development
	1.3.7 Implement new case planning process statewide. Benchmark: New policy and procedure will be in effect and implemented statewide.	03/01/05	Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person
1.4 To assure uniform practice of concurrent planning, we will provide training to 90% of appropriate DCFS staff, including Area Managers, Supervisors, Family Service Workers involved in foster care, Adoption Specialist, Adoption Supervisors, and program staff, and to OCC attorneys, judges and court staff, Attorney Ad-Litems, CASA and foster parents on concurrent planning and adoption. Concurrent planning training is already included in New Worker Training. (Impacts CFSR Items 7 and 9)	1.4.1 Training on concurrent planning and adoption will be provided to Area Managers, Supervisors, FSW's, Adoption Specialists, Adoption Supervisors, program staff, foster parents and OCC attorneys. Benchmark: Documentation that training on concurrent planning and adoption is provided to Area Managers, DCFS Supervisors, FSW's, Adoption Specialists, Adoption Supervisors, program staff and OCC attorneys, with technical assistance from the National Resource Center on Foster Care and Permanency Planning. 1.4.2 In conjunction with the Arkansas Supreme Court Committee on Foster Care and Adoption and the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Foster Care and Permanency Planning, training on concurrent planning will be provided to OCC Attorneys, judges, court staff, Attorney Ad-Litems and CASA. Benchmark: Documentation of provision of training to OCC Attorneys, judges, court staff, Attorney Ad-Litems, and CASA, with technical assistance from the National Resource Center on Foster Care and Permanency Planning. 1.4.3 Concurrent planning information provided during Foster/Adopt Pride Training will be updated and enhanced. Benchmark: Completion of review and revision of Foster/Adopt Pride training to include more information on concurrent planning and adoption.	01/01/04 12/01/03 02/01/04	Bob Sebourn, Manager Professional Development Unit; Alden Roller, Adoption Field Services Manager; Ed Wallace, Manager, Foster Care Unit Bob Sebourn, Manager of Professional Development Unit; Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit; Ed Wallace, Manager, Foster Care Unit

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
1.5 In addition to the systemic improvements to assessment and case planning included in 1.2 and 1.3 above that will impact the assessment and case planning for youth receiving independent living services, we will specifically improve the uniformity and quality of youths' independent living plan and their involvement in the development of their plan. (Impacts CFSR Item 8)	1.5.1 Develop new policy and handbook publication on independent living. DCFS policy on Independent Living (IL) that requires the results of the Ansell Casey assessment is a part of the child's case plan. This should increase the inclusion of independent living skills development in case plans for teens. Benchmark: Promulgation of new DCFS IL policy and procedures	08/01/03	Jim Dennis, Manager, IL Program; Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy Unit
	1.5.2 Provide training to IL Coordinators, FSW's involved in foster care, Supervisors, and Area Managers, and to foster parents and providers on new IL policy and publication and include coordination of IL services to youth with goal of adoption. Benchmark: Provision of training on new IL policy and publication to 90% of IL Coordinators, FSW's involved in foster care, Supervisors, and Area Managers, and to foster parents and providers.	03/01/04	Jim Dennis, Manager IL Program; Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit
	1.5.3 In conjunction with the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Youth Development offer training on the IL program to annual and area foster parent conferences and support group meetings. Benchmark: In conjunction with the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Youth Development, provision of IL training at annual and area foster parent conferences and support group meetings.	09/01/04	Jim Dennis, Manager of IL Program; Pat Bell, Foster Parent Ombudsman; Area IL Coordinators

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
1.6 Enhance the quality and quantity of visits by assessing the barriers to quality visitation and developing recommendations to address the barriers. (Impacts CFSR Item 13)	1.6.1 Utilizing focus group sessions with staff and parents, review existing policy, identify barriers to visitation and develop strategies, including policy revisions, if appropriate, for improving the frequency and quality of visits between the child in foster care and their parent and/ or siblings. Benchmarks: Written document outlining the findings and recommendations about improvement of frequency and quality of visits from parent/worker focus groups.	12/01/03	Debbie Shiell, Manager, Planning Unit; Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, In-Home Services
	1.6.2 Develop training curriculum on the importance of visits and options for the location of visits. Benchmark: Staff training curriculum developed based on recommendations.	04/01/04	Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit
	1.6.3 Train DCFS Supervisors and FSW's using curriculum developed. Benchmarks: Training provided to 90% of appropriate DCFS FSW's and supervisors.	07/01/04	Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services
1.7 Expand policy and training to address visits with siblings and relatives after termination of parental rights (TPR). (Impacts CFSR Items 13 and 14)	1.7.1 Revise foster care and adoption policy to clarify visits with siblings and relatives after TPR. Benchmarks: DCFS policy and procedures promulgated that clarify visits with siblings and relatives after TPR.	11/01/03	Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy Unit; Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, In-Home Services
	1.7.2 Train DCFS FSW's and Supervisors on new policy guidance. Benchmark: Documentation that 90% of all appropriate DCFS FSW's and Supervisors were trained on new policy guidance on visits with siblings and relatives after TPR.	03/01/04	Bob Sebourn, Manager of Professional Development Unit; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services
	1.7.3 Revise New Worker training curriculum to include guidance about visits after TPR. Benchmark: New Worker training curriculum is updated to include	03/01/04	Bob Sebourn, Manager of Professional Development Unit

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
	guidance regarding visits with siblings and relatives after TPR.		
1.8 Recentralize Adoption field staff in order to allow Adoption Specialists and Supervisors to have direct supervision out of Central Office, to focus on case planning for children with a goal of adoption, in order increase uniformity of adoption services statewide. (Impacts CFSR item 9)	1.8.1 Identify Adoption Specialists and Supervisors. Benchmark: List of identified Adoption Specialists and Supervisors. 1.8.2 Train Adoption Specialists and Supervisors on recentralization and new adoption processes. Benchmark: Copy of training curriculum, schedule and attendees. 1.8.3 New structure will be implemented. Benchmark: Organizational chart of the new unit.	08/01/03 08/01/03 08/01/03	Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services

Strategy 2: Expand the array of available services

Another finding in the Arkansas CFSR report was that services that families need were not always available, especially in rural areas. We plan to develop a system that can be used for on-going assessment of services needs and planning to meet those needs, in order to achieve the following goals:

- *Increase the capacity to meet the service needs of the child, parents, relative caregivers and foster parents. [Outcome S2 – Items 3 and 4, Outcome P1 – Items 5, 6 and 8, Outcome P2 – Items 13 and 15 and Outcome WB1 – Item 7]*
- *Increase the service capacity to meet the educational and physical and mental health needs of children served. [Outcomes WB 2 – Items 21, 22 and 23]*
- *Reduce foster care re-entries while assuring children are maintained in their home safely [Outcome P1 – Item 5].*
- *The process for assessing needs and planning to meet those needs will be addressed in Strategy 1.*

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
2.1 Review and prioritize service needs and contracts to existing budget allocations. (Impacts CFSR Items 3 and 17) 2.2 Expand the current array of services and address service gaps, especially in rural areas, to meet the needs of children and families served by DCFS in order to protect children and prevent removal. (Impacts CFSR Items 3 –6 and 17)	2.1.1 Service needs and contracts will be prioritized to reflect existing budget allocations. Benchmark: Document with the priorities and list of contracted services. 2.2.1 With technical assistance from the National Resource Center on Family Centered Practice, a work group of program staff, policy staff, field staff, consumers and stakeholders will be formed to develop a methodology for service needs assessment and service development which will include a process for identification of barriers to effective utilization of services and planning to address those barriers. Benchmark: With technical assistance from the National Resource Center on Family Centered Practice, development of a written methodology to assess and address service needs, including a process for identification of barriers to effective utilization of services and planning to address those barriers. 2.2.2 Implement the service needs assessment methodology. Compile and analyze the results. Benchmark: Documentation of completed needs assessment that will provide information on service needs by county, area and statewide. 2.2.3 Develop a methodology to reduce service gaps by aligning existing DCFS resources, including contracts and RFP's and other purchase of services, with identified service needs. Benchmark: Document completed for reducing service gaps by aligning resources with service needs. 2.2.4 Develop a system of informing staff, providers, consumers and other stakeholders of the available services. Benchmark: Implementation of written process for informing staff, providers, consumers and other stakeholders of DCFS services.	 09/01/03 12/01/03 07/01/04 08/01/04 10/01/04	Billye Burke, Assistant Director, Community Support; Albert Marlar, Assistant Director, Financial and Administrative Support Billye Burke, Assistant Director, Community Support Albert Marlar, Assistant Director, Office of Financial and Administrative Support Billye Burke, Assistant Director, Community Support Albert Marlar, Assistant Director, Office of Financial and Administrative Support Billye Burke, Assistant Director, Community Support Albert Marlar, Assistant Director, Office of Financial and Administrative Support Billye Burke, Assistant Director, Community Support Albert Marlar, Assistant Director, Office of Financial and Administrative

	2.2.5 Request for proposals (RFP's), contracts and other purchase of service methods align with identified needs assessment results. Benchmark: Document completed which compares needs assessment result with purchase of service decisions.	02/01/04	Billye Burke, Assistant Director, Community Support Albert Marlar, Assistant Director, Office of Financial and Administrative Support

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
2.3 Revise information sharing mechanisms to assure service staff are aware of services and how to access these services. (Impacts CFSR Items 3–6, 17 and 23)	2.3.1. A workgroup which includes DCFS County Supervisors and training staff will review current new worker and supervisory training processes to determine if there is a better way to assure that staff have information about programs and services and how to access them and will make recommendations for needed changes to the training process. Benchmark: Written analysis of current New Worker and supervisor training for adequacy of information on services, with recommendations for needed changes. 2.3.2 Revise new worker training and supervisory training process to address recommendations of the workgroup. Benchmark: Training curriculum is revised and implemented.	10/01/03 02/01/04	Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person (s)
2.4 Develop policy and procedures to better meet the educational needs of the children DCFS serves. (Impacts CFSR Item 21)	2.4.1 In conjunction with the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues and the Administrative Office of the Courts, training will be provided to OCC attorneys, judges, court personnel, Attorney-ad-Litems and CASA on meeting the educational needs of children in foster care.		Pat Page, Assistant Director, LARP
	Benchmark: In conjunction with the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues and the Administrative Office of the Courts, provide training on meeting the educational needs of children in foster care to OCC attorneys, judges, court personnel, Attorney-ad-Litems, and CASA.	12/01/03	
	2.4.2 Based on the recommendations of the interagency Education Committee and in collaboration with the Department of Education, develop new policy and procedures on meeting the educational needs of children.		Pat Page, Assistant Director, LARP, Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy Unit
	Benchmark: DCFS policy and procedures on meeting the educational needs of children are promulgated.	03/01/04	
	2.4.3 Develop and implement a MOU with the Department of Education on meeting the educational needs of children in foster care.		Pat Page, Assistant Director, LARP, Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy Unit
	Benchmark: Develop and implement a MOU with the Department of Education on meeting the educational needs of children in foster care.	08/01/04	
	2.4.4 Train DCFS staff and foster parents on meeting the educational needs of the children DCFS services.		Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit
	Benchmark: Develop and implement initial and ongoing training for FSW's, supervisors, Area Managers and foster parents on meeting the educational needs of the children DCFS serves.	10/01/04	

Action Step	Benchmarks/ Tasks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person
2.5 Increase the percentage of children whose physical health care needs are addressed in service planning. (Impacts CFSR Item 22)	2.5.1 The UAMS PACE program will identify, through its quarterly monitoring of health care follow-up, areas that are not completing follow-up 95% of the time and will consult with those areas to establish systems to assure recommended services are provided. Benchmark: UAMS PACE program will provide consultation to all DCFS service areas that are not completing follow-up 95% of the time, to establish systems to assure recommended services are provided.	11/01/03	Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
2.6 Increase the percentage of children in foster care who receive initial, comprehensive and ongoing mental health services that are documented in CHRIS and hard copy files. (Impacts CFSR Item 23)	2.6.1 In conjunction with the Division of Mental Health, its providers, and the Division of Medical Services , DCFS will develop and implement new policy and procedures on meeting the mental health needs of children in foster care that reflects recommendations of the Foster Child Mental Health Collaborative		Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy Unit; John Allen, Mental Health Coordinator
	Benchmark: Revised DCFS policy and procedures on Mental Health Services for children in foster care are promulgated.	12/01/03	
	2.6.2 Develop and implement initial and ongoing training for DCFS staff and foster parents on meeting the mental health needs of children DCFS serves.		Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit; John Allen, Mental Health Coordinator
	Benchmark: Provision of training for FWS's, Supervisors, Area Managers and foster parents on services to meet the mental health needs of DCFS foster children.	08/01/04	
	2.6.3 Incorporate training on meeting the mental health needs of children into ongoing training for DCFS staff, foster parents, and providers		Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit; John Allen, Mental Health Coordinator
	Benchmark: Documentation that training is included in ongoing continuing education training package for staff and foster parents.	08/01/04	

Strategy 3 – Develop a Full Continuum of Placement Options

Children who enter foster care need to have a stable placement while in care, one that can meet their needs, including any special needs that they bring, and that will work as part of the team to move the child to permanency. If they are in a stable placement that is meeting their needs, we believe that they will move more quickly to permanence and will be less likely to re-enter foster care. A study conducted on re-entry confirmed this belief.

We want to develop more options in terms of number and types of foster homes that would be available to children entering foster care. We want to better support the foster homes that we have. We want to develop a level of care system that would provide children with foster parents who are trained, supported and compensated to care for special needs that children may have. We know that relatives often provide the connections that a child needs in his life and want to make sure that relatives are always explored as a resource.

We know that recruiting new foster parents is not the only answer – we also need to keep the good foster parents that we have. Therefore, we want to do study the reasons why foster parents might decide to quit fostering.

Finally, we want to assure that we have recruited sufficient adoptive homes to meet the needs of waiting children.

The completion of the action steps and tasks for this strategy outlined in the matrix portion of the plan will accomplish the following:
- *reduce foster care re-entries while assuring children are maintained in their home safely [Outcome P1 - Item 5];*
- *decrease the number of placements children experience while in foster care [Outcome P1 - Item 6];*
- *place siblings in foster care together unless to do so would be detrimental to the children [Outcome P2 - Item 12];*
- *assure relative placement is explored in all cases where a child is placed out of home [Outcome P2 – Item 15];*
- *assure children in foster care who cannot return home are placed in an adoptive home soon after termination of parental rights [Outcome P1 - Items 7 and 9];*
- *assures that children's needs are met while in care [Outcome WB1 – Item 17, and Outcome WB2 – Items 21-23] .*

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
3.1 Children who enter foster care may have special behavioral or mental health needs. Whether they do or not, if their needs are not met by appropriate foster parenting while they are in care, they may leave care evidencing behavior that is more problematic than when they entered care, increasing the possibility that re-entry may occur. In order to reduce foster care re-entry, increase by 10% the number of foster parents recruited who are willing to accept children that enter foster care and meet their special needs. (Impacts CFSR Item 5, 6, and 12)	3.1.1 A baseline of number of foster homes will be established. Benchmark: Establish a baseline number of foster homes. 3.1.2 Develop and implement a positive statewide media campaign about foster parenting, in conjunction with the DHS Office of Communications and the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Foster Care and Permanency Planning, that will augment the annual plan for the recruitment of foster parents in order to improve recruitment of foster parents to meet the needs of the children entering care. Benchmark: Documentation of media campaign and materials used. 3.1.3 Revise DCFS policy on Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention to clearly outline the system utilized and expectations of staff in that process. Benchmark: Copies of promulgated policies and procedures clarifying responsibility for Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention. 3.1.4 Update and refine the Foster Family Needs Assessment to ensure Recruiters and County Supervisors are able to more adequately represent the total numbers and types of foster homes needed. Benchmark: The Foster Family Needs Assessment is revised to more adequately reflect the number and types of foster homes needed. 3.1.5 Develop training curriculum on new policy and procedures on Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention and the new Foster Family Needs Assessment. Benchmark: Training curriculum is developed for staff.	09/01/03 01/01/04 01/01/04 01/01/04 04/01/04	Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, Out-of-Home Serivces Vanaria Vickers, Administrator, Out-of-Home Services; Pat Bell, Foster Parent Ombudsman Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy Unit Ed Wallace, Manager, Foster Care; Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy; Pat Bell, Foster Parent Ombudsman Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit; Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, Out-of-Home Services

	3.1.6 FSW's and supervisors involved in foster care, Area Managers and other appropriate staff (e.g., placement unit staff) are trained in the new Foster Parent Recruitment policy and procedures, the Foster Family Needs Assessment and recruitment techniques.		Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit; Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, Out-of-Home Services; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services
	Benchmark: FSW's and supervisors involved in foster care, Area Managers, and other appropriate staff (e.g., placement unit staff) are trained in the new Foster Parent Recruitment policy and procedures, the Foster Family Needs Assessment and techniques for recruitment.	08/01/04	
	3.1.7 Incorporate curriculum into continuing education required for all field staff involved in foster care services.		Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit;
	Benchmark: Curriculum is incorporated into ongoing staff continuing education training.	08/01/04	
	3.1.8 Develop recruitment plan for the specific needs outlined in the Foster Family Needs Assessment for each county, area and statewide.		Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services; Ed Wallace, Manager, Foster Care
	Benchmark: Recruitment plans developed that reflect the needs of children coming into care.	09/01/04	

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
3.2 We will implement and utilize a foster care level of care system that will more adequately match a child's needs with the foster parents skills and will provide better support to the foster parents to care for the child. By increasing the likelihood of a stable placement this will enable the child to maintain connections with important people in their lives. (Impacts CFSR Items 6, 12, 14, 15, 17)	3.2.1 In conjunction with technical assistance from the National Resource Center on Foster Care and Permanency Planning, establish criteria about the characteristics of children appropriate for each level, assessment of children and assignment to a level, appropriate expectations and compensation for each level and appropriate training and support for each level of care. Benchmark: In conjunction with the National Resource Center on Foster Care and Permanency Planning, a written report with recommendations for changes is complete, including criteria developed that describes and defines levels of care and placement types to meet the needs of children coming into care. 3.2.2 Develop policy on level of care system. Benchmark: Policy on level of care system. 3.2.3 Develop and implement training FSW's and supervisors involved in foster care and foster parents on the level of care system. Benchmark: Provision of training on the new level of care system will be presented to Area Manager, FSW's and supervisors involved in foster care and foster parents. 3.2.4 Level of Care System will be implemented. Benchmark: Issuance of promulgated policy implementing level of care system.	 02/01/04 05/01/04 08/01/04 08/01/04	Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, Out-of-Home Services; Georganne Lewis, Planning Specialist; Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy Unit Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit; Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, Out-of-Home Services; Pat Bell, Foster Parent Ombudsman Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person (s)
3.3 To increase stability of foster care placements, expand current supports (helpline and support groups) and specialized training for foster parents. (Impacts CFSR Item 6 and 17)	3.3.1 Develop a help line process to be available to provide consultation and support to foster parents statewide on a 24-hour basis. Benchmark: Helpline operational to foster parents. 3.3.2 Foster parent support groups cover every area of the state. These groups provide information, training and support for foster parents. Benchmark: Half of the areas will have foster parent support groups by May 1, 2004. The rest of the areas will have foster parent support groups by May 1, 2005. 3.3.3 Work with MidSouth Training Academy to develop and implement intensive skills building training for foster parents in behavior management and working with sibling groups to be offered as continuing education statewide on an on-going basis. Benchmark: Intensive skill building training in behavior management and in work with sibling groups will be available to foster parents.	 02/01/04 06/01/04 06/01/05 12/01/04	Pat Bell, Foster Parent Ombudsman; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services Pat Bell, Foster Parent Ombudsman; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services Bob Sebourn, Manager, Professional Development Unit

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person(s)
3.4 To have sufficient foster homes to meet the needs of children entering care, we need to not only recruit appropriate homes, we also need to retain those homes that we have. In order to be able to identify and address foster parent retention issues, we will develop an exit interview process for foster parents. (Impacts CFSR Item 6)	3.4.1 Develop an exit interview process, as part of the Division's CQI plan, to determine why foster parents stop fostering and what could be done to increase retention of foster parents. Benchmark: Exit interview process is implemented. 3.4.2 Annual review of the results of foster parent exit interviews will be published. Benchmark: Publication of summary of first annual review of foster parent exit interviews. 3.4.3 Corrective action plan will be developed to address issues that arose in review of foster parent exit interviews. Benchmark: Submission of corrective action plan developed to address issues that arose in foster parent exit interviews.	 10/01/03 10/01/04 12/01/04	Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, Out-of-Home Services; Debbie Shiell, Manager, Planning Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, Out-of-Home Services; Debbie Shiell, Manager, Planning; Area Managers Varnaria Vickers, Administrator, Out-of-Home Services; Quranner Cotledge, Assistant Director, Community Services

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person
3.5 Implement and monitor the statewide adoption recruitment plan in order to increase homes for African American children waiting for an adoptive home and for other waiting children. [Note: In the CFSR Final Report, it was mentioned that some stakeholders expressed beliefs that Arkansas is reluctant to utilize national adoption registries. Arkansas does not agree with this belief. At the time of the review, we had several children on the national adoption registry. Currently we have in excess of 30 children on the national adoption registry, and we are preparing to add more. (Impacts CFSR Item 9)	3.5.1 Develop an inquiry process to identify possible adoptive homes. Benchmark: Document that outlines inquiry process and quarterly report on the total number of adoptive family inquiries. 3.5.2 Document baseline number of approved adoptive homes for African American children, teenagers, sibling groups of three or more children and children with severe disabilities. Benchmark: Submission of baseline numbers of approved adoptive homes for African American children, teenagers, sibling groups of three or more children and children with severe disabilities. 3.5.3 Recruit and retain African American adoptive families. Benchmark: Each of the ten DCFS Areas has recruited and retained a minimum of ten (10) African American families. (Exception: If the geographical area of one Adoption Specialist has less than 5% African American population their minimum number may be adjusted accordingly, but the statewide total will supplement the reduced number). 3.5.4 Recruit adoptive homes to meet the needs of teenagers, sibling groups of three or more children, children with severe disabilities and non-African American minority children. Benchmark: 10% increase in approved adoptive homes recruited to meet the needs of teenagers, sibling groups of three or more children, children with severe disabilities and non-African American minority children. 3.5.5 Utilize the National Resource Center on Special Needs Adoption to offer training to mental health professionals on supporting adoptive families. Benchmark: Training offered to mental health professionals on supporting adoptive families.	 11/01/03 09/01/03 Interim: 07/01/04 – 50 homes Final: 07/01/05 – 100 homes 07/01/04 – 5% increase 07/01/05 – 10% increase 11/01/03	Gloria Aboagye, Manager, Adoptions Alden Roller, Adoption Field Services Manager; Alden Roller, Adoption Field Services Manager; Adoption Specialists Alden Roller, Adoption Field Services Manager; Adoption Specialists Pat Page, Assistant Director, LARP; Alden Roller, Adoption Field Services Manager

Action Step	Tasks/Benchmarks	Benchmarks' Dates of Achievement	Lead Person (s)
3.6 Ensure relatives are appropriately explored as placement options. (Impacts Outcome P1 Item 7 and Outcome P2 – Items 12 and 15)	3.6.1 Work with the DHS Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) and the Administrative Offices of the Courts to request on emergency petitions that parents be required to provide a complete list of relatives to be evaluated as potential placements Benchmark: Requirement for parents to provide a complete list of relatives is utilized in all emergency petitions and court orders. 3.6.2 Develop a process that will provide documentation that the relatives have been advised of their option to receive financial support Benchmark: Implementation of a written process and form that provides relatives with information about their option to receive financial support.	01/01/04 03/01/04	Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy; Marilyn Counts, Managers, Quality Assurance Sheryl Alexander, Manager, Policy;